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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, who has given us the rich heritage of this good land, we praise Your Name. During this season of peace on Earth, thank You for continuing to supply our needs.

Lord, help us to listen to the quiet direction of Your spirit. Consecrate our speech to Your service, that we may honor You with our tongues.

As Your Senators today seek to do what is right, make Your way clear to them. Strengthen them to face the pressures that come with protecting freedom.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffery Paul Hopkins, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am worried that we are heading toward another unnecessary, manufactured crisis because our current government funding is set to expire in 8 days. So I want to take a moment and talk about how we got here, and the path forward.

In fiscal year 2022, Leader MCCONNELL required parity between defense and nondefense funding. This was a requirement that we met—Democrats and Republicans—and it provided the commonsense framework that allowed us to finish our work.

Now, the Republicans have abandoned this framework, demanding steep cuts to programs that the American people rely on. The cuts will be more painful as inflation continues to squeeze pocketbooks. Heating, cooling, food, and housing—these costs are becoming more expensive.

They have justified this change of tactics by claiming that Democrats spent \$700 billion in reconciliation bills and that this should negate the need to provide parity to nondefense programs. Well, of course, there is an obvious flaw in that kind of reasoning. The spending

that they are talking about was to meet an unprecedented crisis that killed more than 1 million Americans and threatened to collapse the global economy.

Did people expect us not to defend Americans at that time?

The bills were meant to get us out of the pandemic, get the Nation healthy, and get our economy back on track, and I believe they are accomplishing that goal.

Would anybody say they wish we had not spent that money?

They weren't meant to fund the basic functions of the American Government in fiscal year 2023; they were meant to take care of the dangers of the pandemic that killed 1 million Americans and threatened the collapse of the global economy.

Now, we Democrats do agree with our Republican colleagues that inflation threatens the national security. We all agree on that. But nondefense programs face an equal threat and demand an equal response because of inflation, and if we have inaction on the Republican side, that threatens bipartisan priorities and programs—priorities and programs that both Republicans and Democrats support.

Without an omnibus, the bipartisan CHIPS law—remember the CHIPS law? That passed this summer. It will help our country compete with China. Well, it won't be funded, and that competition languishes. And our promise to our veterans will be broken as the bipartisan PACT Act would go underfunded. VA medical care would fall at least \$7.5 billion short.

Without an omnibus, those who are opposing the omnibus or those who, by inaction, won't support getting an omnibus before us will defund the police by slashing assistance to local law enforcement and keep 1,500 police officers off the streets and out of our communities. In the face of a surge in domestic violence, it will be the inaction of those who are not helping us get an

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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omnibus bill through that will leave the bipartisan reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act without the new funding it needs.

Remember when I and others rewrote the Violence Against Women Act? We added the LGBTQ community, we added the Native American community, and we added money to go after those who are predators of children.

Now, Republicans may want to blame Democrats for stifling the economy, but it is their position that will short-change funding at our ports of entry and strangle the flow of commerce and the economy's ability to grow. You can have rhetoric, but then reality catches up. And you need the money to fund our ports of entry, or we all know the effect it will have on the economy.

And if they do not join in this, it will be Republicans who turn their backs on small businesses by not providing the SBA with the resources it needs to help small businesses thrive.

And sending men and women to the Moon, that funding is going to be delayed.

For months, the Democrats have asked our Republican colleagues to join us at the negotiating table, and for months we were met with dead silence. At this very moment, my door and the doors of my staff are open. They can join us in this work at any time.

Time is running out. We have to move forward. I have stayed here the past several weekends to be available for any kind of negotiations people want. So, to move this forward, I would hope we would have had a bipartisan bill on the floor by now.

On Monday, Chair DeLAURO of the House and I will introduce an omnibus bill that we believe is fair and bipartisan. It will fully fund defense at the NDAA level, and it will provide the needed increase to nondefense programs to both stave off inflation but especially to help the American people.

And to show our good faith, we eliminated the so-called poison pill riders that Republicans have objected to, and we firmly believe this bill can and should earn the votes of at least 10 Republican Senators. So I think it is a reasonable path forward.

The money runs out on December 16. I think it would help if my Republican friends accept yes for an answer. There is plenty in here for both Republicans and Democrats to declare a victory.

But most importantly, the American people can declare victory. Each side will get a large part of what they want, but the most important part, the American people will get what they need. We should call this an American bill. It is not a Republican or a Democratic bill; it is a bill for America because if we don't do it, we are going to have a continuing resolution at last year's level, with no adjustments for inflation, with real-life consequences that would entail.

I would hope no Republican wants that because if they do, we end up with a continuing resolution that lowers

funds of everything from defense to nondefense programs. It damages our economy; it damages our defense; and they will have only themselves to blame.

I would hope it won't be a case of who passes blame of a disaster but rather a case where we come together and say to America: You can declare victory.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, earlier this morning, the Senate Democratic caucus held elections to determine party leadership for the 118th Congress. With gratitude and humility, I am happy to say I have been unanimously elected, once again, as the Democratic leader.

I want to thank every Member of my caucus for entrusting me with this awesome responsibility. My admiration and affection for every Member of my caucus is really limitless. They are my friends, my compadres, my companions. We work together. We are an amazing unit. With only 50 votes ranging, of course, from JOE MANCHIN to BERNIE SANDERS, we have compiled one of the greatest legislative sessions in this century and even the last one in what we have done. And next year we will continue to try to do great things for our country in the next 2 years.

I also wish to congratulate and thank my colleagues who form our caucus's leadership, especially Senator SCHATZ for becoming its newest member. I also want to thank Senator MURRAY for her incredible work as assistant Democratic leader in the 117th Congress and congratulate her on becoming President pro tem-designate, succeeding Senator LEAHY, who will soon retire.

I also wish to thank my staff. They are the greatest. They are just the greatest. They have advised me and guided me over the last 2 years and helped me prepare for the Congress to come.

I would not want to go through a 50-50 Senate with anyone but them. They are remarkable, hard-working, brilliant, and just fine human beings, as well, who really care. It has been such a privilege, honor, and joy to work with them. We must now look to the future. Our focus in the Congress to come shall be no different from our focus in the Congress that concludes: getting things done for the American people.

We want to keep this Chamber active, alive, and busy, as much as possible. I make a clarion call to my Re-

publican colleagues: reject MAGA and work with us in the years to come. We have made huge strides this Congress, and I hope we can build on that because the problems of our country are many and run deep. When Americans saw us working on real issues this year, they responded positively and trusted this majority with 2 more years at the helm.

Now, it is clear that many on the other side of the aisle, our Republican friends, are unhappy with the way their party has been doing business. Some of the Republicans want to pull the party even more in a MAGA direction. That is a recipe for disaster, for their party and the country. But there are many others who know driving down the MAGA road is like following Thelma and Louise off the cliff.

We very much want to work with that group that understands that we have got to get things done in a bipartisan way and just railing and shrieking and decrying with no solutions and pure anger ain't the way to go, and it is not the way the American people want us to go.

So I urge my non-MAGA Republican colleagues to reject extremism, reject MAGA, and embrace bipartisanship. Don't just block bills next Congress for the sake of gridlock. Let us come to the table and find ways to move forward together.

Our differences run deep. Our disagreements are frequent. But that does not diminish the importance of working alongside one another when necessary to improve the lives of the American people.

I have no doubt that if we give it a good-faith effort, we can be very successful—successful beyond what anyone would think right now.

To the skeptics and the naysayers all I have to say, when you say we can't do this, I say look at the record of the last 2 years. In a 50-50 Senate, both sides found ways to pass the most ambitious legislative agenda, as I mentioned before, in a very long time—one of the most ambitious in decades and decades.

We got infrastructure done. We reformed the post office. We reauthorized VAWA. We ended forced arbitration for sexual harassment. We passed anti-lynching legislation and helped our shipping supply lanes. After the shootings in Buffalo and Uvalde, we defied the NRA and passed the first major gun safety bill in over 30 years. Together we approved the CHIPS and Science Act, passed the PACT Act, ratified the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO, and stood with our friends in Ukraine. And a few weeks ago, we came together to pass the Respect for Marriage Act, which the House is set to approve today.

Of course, when we do not agree, Democrats will go at it alone, as we did for the Inflation Reduction Act. I know both parties fiercely disagree on the role of the government in tackling these problems, such as environment and prescription drug costs. But even